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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001019

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
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WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: PM ON HOPE, CITE SOLEIL, AND DRUGS

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 993
[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 987
[1](#)C. PORT AU PRINCE 966

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ambassador met with Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis June 6 to discuss a recent issue in the GoH's implementation of the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act of 2006 (HOPE), as well as his contention that the USG and other international donors are not adequately coordinating Cite Soleil development efforts with the GoH. The PM assured the Ambassador that the GoH is committed to strictly monitoring use of HOPE privileges. The PM cited two easily refuted complaints against USG aid efforts and, without retracting all of his criticisms, he did admit that some of the blame for poor coordination rests with the GoH. The PM expressed concern over recent news coverage of an increased number of mosques in Haiti. The PM downplayed news of a possible cabinet shake-up and emphasized GoH dedication to justice reform and to fighting narco-trafficking and corruption. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In an hour meeting June 6 with Prime Minister Alexis, Ambassador raised the issue of a recent textiles shipment from Haiti to the U.S. whose proprietors were attempting to claim HOPE benefits prior to the implementation of the HOPE bill benefits. She stressed the importance of internal controls within the Ministry of Commerce to ensure that only authorized officials have access to the HOPE stamp or so-called "visa." Failure to protect the integrity of the HOPE process would undermine its validity and cause unnecessary problems with U.S. Customs. The PM agreed that the GoH must remain vigilant and on its guard against abuse of HOPE privileges. He said he too was distressed when he heard about the problem, and that he immediately organized a meeting with the Ministry of Commerce. The Ambassador suggested that it would be best to have a single stamp for shipments to the U.S. to avoid future confusion and reiterated her concern about the need for strict controls within the Commerce Ministry. The PM responded "'absolutely'" but did not elaborate further. He stated that he will

reinforce with his advisors the importance of tight controls.

He also said they will put in place a coordination mechanism between the PM, the Ministry of Commerce and customs.

13. (C) The Ambassador expressed her dismay about the PM's recent statements to the donors that the USG does not adequately coordinate the Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI) for Cite Soleil. Detailing the various efforts made by the Embassy and visiting USG officials to engage the GOH at a variety of levels on the program, she suggested that the GOH needs to better coordinate its own communications on this important program. She reiterated her offer to brief the PM himself on HSI on a regular basis and noted that the HSI office is preparing a detailed discussion of each project for the Working Group. Alexis said that Minister of Public Works Frantz Verella complained to him that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was rebuilding a marketplace in Cite Soleil that IOM and USAID knew the ministry was planning to rehabilitate. (Note: An IOM representative on June 6 told Poloff that IOM had heard this complaint from Verella on several previous occasions but that in fact they began work on the market long before the ministry's development plan was unveiled. End note.) The PM also expressed concern that funding for construction of police stations had been delayed. The Ambassador assured him that the money is now available and construction can move forward as soon as the Ministry of Justice signs the LOA.

14. (C) Alexis argued that coordination problems in the Cite Soleil programs arise from both the GoH and the USG. He has now designated a member of his staff, Dr. Ariel Azael, dedicated to the portfolio. The PM agreed with the Ambassador that there is a need for regular working group meetings on Cite Soleil, and admitted that his own staff had missed previous coordination meetings. Noting that the HSI Program is, in part, a response to GOH's request for quick acting

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programs on the ground, the Ambassador suggested that there is a real need for a GoH presence in the area to complement HSI and other international efforts already underway in the area. The PM stated that he is ''burning with desire to be in Cite Soleil'' but that to avoid a public outcry, he must wait until the Ministry of Public Works has visible projects before he sets foot in the neighborhood. He also reported that he has asked Dr. Azael to select a GoH team to establish a physical presence inside Cite Soleil.

15. (C) The PM expressed concern over a recent article in the New York Daily News citing a former USG official who claimed the increased number of mosques in Haiti represents a threat to the U.S. Noting that we had seen the article, the Ambassador said that it appeared to be a collection of old rumors and gossip and did not reflect our understanding of the situation.

16. (C) The Ambassador questioned the PM about the possibility of a cabinet shake-up (ref A). The PM coyly noted that he was referring to a possible "re-engineering" rather than a "reshuffle." According to Alexis, his comments to the press on May 29 were about a broader re-focusing of government efforts, an idea on which President Preval had asked him to reflect. The PM said that Preval thinks the government is dysfunctional and that they could be more efficient if they focused their attention on priority sectors. (Comment: The PM appears to have backtracked somewhat on his previous comments that a cabinet shake-up is imminent. He is known to want to make such changes, and has told Preval that it is his responsibility as PM to take action. Although Alexis would like us believe it is Preval that is reluctant to give the go-ahead, sources close to the President tell us that Preval is contemplating changes. End comment.)

17. (C) The Ambassador offered her congratulations on the Haitian National Police cocaine seizure and arrest of several

drug traffickers in Leogane on May 31. The PM said that the seizure is part of an intensification of efforts not just by the HNP but also the National Committee for the Fight Against Drugs (CONALD), the financial intelligence unit (UCREF) and others. He stated that the team stopped in Leogane was well-known and had ties to presidential candidates, but did not cite any specific names. He said that in another boon for Preval's anti-corruption campaign, the Secretary of State for Public Security, Luc Eucher Joseph, called him on June 5 to discuss corruption in the police force. He proudly pointed out that such a campaign would not have enjoyed this success four months ago.

¶18. (C) The PM agreed with the Ambassador's assessment that the key issue for Haiti is now justice reform, and he stated that the three laws before parliament need to be passed (ref B). In a weakly veiled reference to Senator Youri Latortue, the PM noted that some parliamentarians are trying to make major changes to the proposed legislation and that the GoH is working with parliament to emphasize that it would be a mistake to weaken the laws.

¶19. (C) The PM noted that the situation in his hometown of Gonaives has calmed considerably in the last few days, following several weeks of violence and protests (ref C). He said that the city is in dire need of justice reform and that he has been working with both the ministry of justice and the local police commissioner on the issue.

¶10. (C) Comment: The Prime Minister's swift reaction to the stamp incident and repeated assurances of increased vigilance indicate that he understands the gravity of keeping tight control over all HOPE privileges and we expect that he will closely monitor the process. The PM appeared somewhat abashed to be taken to task for criticizing the USG on coordination of the HSI program, and had to acknowledge that the GoH has not begun to implement any of its own plans for the area. That being said, Alexis will continue to be critical, both publicly and privately, of the rapidly emerging international effort in Cite Soleil, if only because the GOH has yet to take control of the process -- and is

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unlikely to be able to do so.
SANDERSON